

# REGIONAL FORUMS

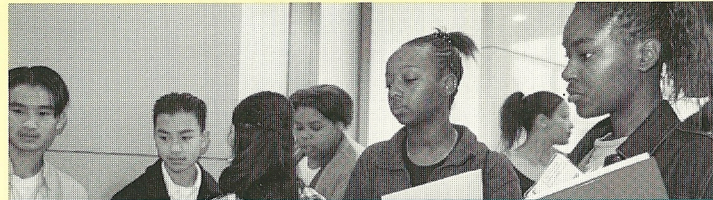
## WHAT WE HEARD

Between October 2001 and January 2002, the Choices for Youth campaign held regional forums in San Diego, the Bay Area and the Central Valley. At each of these events, state legislators, law enforcement leaders, school officials, county and city elected leaders, youth, and community representatives voiced that violence prevention is instrumental in allowing children and youth to become healthy and productive adults.

The discussions and recommendations for the regional forums were strengthened significantly by the ever-present voices of youth at each event. From the Youth Congress in San Diego, to the 25-person youth delegation in the Bay Area, to a youth-prepared-conducted-and-presented survey of other youth in the Central Valley, California's youth sat at the table and stood at the podium to discuss strategies for violence prevention.

We were pleased to have the media covering each of the events, demonstrating the importance of this issue. Local TV, radio and newspapers turned out to publicize the value of providing choices for youth.

This report, "Regional Forums – What We Heard" features highlights from the three events. It summarizes the policy recommendations and comments of youth, the media, law enforcement, senators, supervisors and others who call for full community involvement in violence prevention. This means providing positive choices for youth, such as after school programs, organized sports and job-training programs. This report (and other information on the Choices for Youth campaign) can be found at [www.preventviolence.org](http://www.preventviolence.org).



Choices for Youth

### CHOICES FOR YOUTH WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND OUR THANKS TO ALL OF OUR CO-PLANNERS.

#### SAN DIEGO CO-PLANNERS:

Center for Child Protection Children's Hospital  
of San Diego  
Center for Community Solutions  
Children's Initiative  
EYE Counseling & Crisis Services  
San Diego Coalition to Prevent Youth Violence  
San Diego County Commission on Children,  
Youth & Families  
San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency  
San Diego County Office of Education  
San Diego County Probation Department  
San Diego County Sheriff's Department  
San Diego Police Department  
San Diego Unified School District  
Sweetwater Union High School District

#### BAY AREA CO-PLANNERS:

Alameda County District Attorney's Office  
Alameda County Public Health Department  
Alameda County Sheriff's Office  
City & County of San Francisco Mayor's  
Criminal Justice Council  
Contra Costa Health Services Violence  
Prevention Project  
Hayward Police Department  
Health Realization Institute  
Mt. Diablo Region YMCA  
Oakland Unified School District  
Safe Passages  
San Francisco Delinquency Prevention Commission  
San Francisco Department of Children Youth & Families  
San Francisco County Department of Public Health  
San Francisco District Attorney's Office  
San Francisco Recreation & Park Department  
San Francisco Police Department

San Francisco Sheriff's Department  
San Francisco Unified School District  
—School Health Programs Department  
San Jose Unified School District  
San Mateo County Board of Education  
San Mateo County Probation Department  
Santa Clara County Department of Public Health  
Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department  
STAND! Against Domestic Violence  
UCSF Mt. Zion Violence Prevention Project  
—Department of Pediatrics  
Visitation Valley Community Residency Project  
West Contra Costa Unified School District  
Youth ALIVE!  
Youth Together

#### CENTRAL VALLEY CO-PLANNERS:

City of Fresno—Mayor's Office of Education  
EOC Sanctuary Youth  
Fresno Area Workforce Investment Corp.  
Fresno Barrios Unidos  
Fresno Center for Nonviolence  
Fresno County Department of Community Health  
Fresno County Human Services System  
Fresno County Office of Education  
Fresno County Probation Department  
Fresno County Sheriff's Department  
Fresno City College  
Fresno City Parks & Recreation Department  
Fresno Police Department  
Fresno Unified School District  
Hope Now for Youth  
Maternal, Child, Adolescent Health  
Parlier Unified School District  
Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency  
United Way of Fresno County



Over 100 attendees representing school boards, law enforcement, health, community-based organizations, and city and county government participated in the event. Our co-sponsor and partner in the planning was the Children's Initiative led by *Sandy McBrayer*. Since the shootings in two San Diego high schools last year the community has become a model for the state and the nation of how to involve the community in violence prevention activities. The success of this forum was due in great degree to the many collaborative efforts already underway in this region.

We were pleased that *Senator Dede Alpert* was able to participate as both a keynote speaker in the morning and a response panelist in the afternoon. The day began with an inspiring keynote address by Senator Alpert, in which she congratulated the San Diego community for its diligence in responding to the shootings at Santana and



Granite Hills High Schools and noted the progress that the violence prevention movement has had at the state level.

Following Senator Alpert's opening remarks, a panel was convened to discuss the state of the county's violence prevention strategies. The panel was moderated by *Sandy McBrayer*, CEO, The Children's Initiative. Panelists included: *Granger Ward*, Superintendent, Grossmont Union High School District; *Jim Davis*, Chief of Police, El Cajon; and *Vivian M. Reznik*, M.D., MPH,

Professor, Department of Pediatrics, UCSD. These leaders in health, education and public safety shared examples of how San Diego is addressing the problem of violence against youth and how the rest of the community can get involved.

Attendees then divided into groups based on geographic region to discuss the principles of effective violence prevention and what resources and policies are required to support and sustain programs. During these discussions, groups conferred with state experts in evaluation, research, funding, and policy issues. *Sid Gardner*, Center for Collaborative for Children, *Dr. H. Eric Schockman*, Little Hoover Commission, *Dr. Heriberto Escamilla*, Philliber Research and *David Steinhart*, Commonweal, met with each of the groups to share their expertise and answer questions.

At lunch, the San Diego Youth Congress presented findings from a community conversation, held in May of 2001, on youth perceptions and knowledge of youth violence prevention.

#### The key findings were:

- 92.7% of youth personally knew someone who was a victim of violence;
- 61.5% of youth believed that bullying is a natural part of youth culture and nothing is done to stop it;
- 84.2% reported they could get a gun;
- 70.7% thought that having a gun makes them powerful;
- 85.2% believed that adults do NOT follow through with their policies and/or promises;
- 71.8% said they would participate in a violence prevention project if they had the opportunity; and
- 92.6% of the youth wanted the opportunity to have their voices heard.

The day concluded with the return of Senator Alpert, who was joined by: *Assemblywoman Christine Kehoe*; two *San Diego supervisors*, *Gregory Cox* and *Ron Roberts*; and *Superintendent Ed Brand*. During this session, attendees shared their concerns and recommendations with local leaders, and had the opportunity to hear the initiatives of local leaders.

#### The policy recommendations included:

- Create more programs for kids after school and on weekends;
- Involve parents in school and community programs;
- Recruit more mentors; and,
- Include law enforcement officials as an integral part of the education system.

In order to highlight the strides being made in violence prevention and positive choices for youth, a press event was

held featuring: *Sandy McBrayer*, The Children's Initiative; *Paul Pfingst*, District Attorney; *Alan Crogan*, Chief of Probation; *J.E. Figueroa*, Lieutenant, San Diego County Sheriff-Vista Station; *Norma Nares*, Sergeant, San Diego County Sheriff-San Marcos Station; and *Williams Cline*, Sergeant, Chula Vista Police Department. During this well-attended press conference, law enforcement leaders came together to express that they alone are not the answer to combating youth violence. They called on the entire community to get involved and work together.

#### BAY AREA — NOVEMBER 15, 2001

The Bay Area forum brought together 175 community members and policymakers to address the issue of youth violence. A unique feature of this event was the participation of a 25-person youth delegation. Research shows the importance of listening to young voices before adopting programs to prevent violence. The California Adolescent Health Collaborative coordinated and trained the group of young people to participate in the forum. Through their participation, these 25 young people strengthened recommendations made to policymakers at the state and local levels.

*Senator Don Perata* started the day with a call to action for conference attendees. In addition to calling on community leaders to voice their needs and recommendations, he charged them with the task of holding their representatives accountable for their actions. Perata said that term limits emphasize the need for policymakers to hear information and feedback from their constituents.

Following Perata's speech, *Howard Pinderhughes* from University of California, San Francisco gave a stirring speech on urban youth violence in our communities. In particular, Pinderhughes spoke about how it affects youth of color in disproportionate numbers. His research examines the circumstances under which inner-city youth perceive violence as an appropriate behavior; the differences in how young inner-city men and women think about, understand and experience violence, and why, given similar exposure to risk factors, some youth choose to resort to violence and others do not.

The Bay Area participants then broke into groups based on geographic regions. With the assistance of experts, the groups discussed funding, evaluation, capacity building, collaboration, and developed policy recommendations.

[www.preventviolence.org](http://www.preventviolence.org)



#### LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS UNITE IN SUPPORT OF YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION — RECOMMEND PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE STRUCTURED, SUPERVISED ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH.

"In order to deal with the violence against youth in our community it is going to require a level of partnership inside San Diego that has not been seen in the past but must be built in the future." — ABC News

"Our children deserve the opportunity to grow up healthy and safe. I am happy to see so many here today dedicated to that mission." — *Sandy McBrayer*, CEO, The Children's Initiative

"After-school programs, such as sports, job training, and mentoring programs are examples of what our community needs to reduce youth violence. Putting more police in our schools is not the whole answer." — *Chief Jim Davis*, El Cajon Police Department

"Today the discussion on violence came full circle as law enforcement officials, legislators, and educators met to discuss strategies to improve prevention programs countywide." — NBC News at Four

"In law enforcement, one of the most frustrating things is that unfortunately it takes tragedies to really galvanize the community or communities to really do what I think is the right thing. And in this case, we are talking about prevention."

— *Chief Jim Davis*, aired on News Radio 600, KOGO

"Today's youth need positive choices. They need places to go where they can feel productive and safe, where someone cares about them. This forum will help our community share principles of effective violence prevention and identify policies and resources needed." — *Senator Dede Alpert*



*David Steinhart*, Commonweal, *Dr. Sally Brown*, Philliber Research, *David Kears*, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency and *David Kakishiba*, East Bay Asian Youth Center served as the 'roving' experts.

At the close of the day, participants presented their recommendations to: *Adonai Mack*, Office of the Secretary for Education; *Neil Rufino*, Youth Services, City of San Jose; *Jon Thurston*, Alameda County District Attorney's Office; and, *Nancy Nadel*, Oakland City Council.

#### The policy recommendations included:

- Offer more opportunities for youth involvement in decision-making processes;
- Include job training and employment opportunities in school curriculum;
- Extend funding cycles; and
- Create a standardized data collection system.



#### The youth delegation made separate recommendations, which included:

- Open more teen centers;
- Create more youth coalitions; and
- Host district-wide poetry slam sessions.

Coinciding with the Bay Area forum was the release of survey results of San Francisco Juvenile Hall youth. The survey found that youth offenders believe more structured programs would help prevent youth violence and crime. The findings were publicized to the media at the forum. The survey specifically called for structured, supervised activities during non-school hours. Commissioned by San Francisco Superior Court Judge, *Donna Hitchens*, the survey included approximately 72 youth offenders from all units of San Francisco Juvenile Hall.

#### YOUTH IN BAY AREA DETENTION FACILITIES SURVEYED; RECOMMEND MORE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS TO REDUCE YOUTH VIOLENCE — RESEARCH ALIGNS WITH FINDINGS OF RECENT UCSF STUDY OF YOUTH VIOLENCE IN SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOODS.

"It is clear from our survey of young people in Juvenile Hall that they need positive choices during non-school hours to help protect them from becoming victims of youth violence." — *Julia Sabori*, co-founder and Executive Director of the H.O.M.E.Y. Project

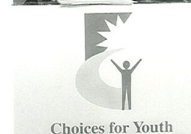
What would have kept you out of Juvenile Hall? — 75% of the respondents said that after-school programs during non-school hours would have deterred them from negative activities.

"33% of the young people from the Mission, Bayview and Hunters Point neighborhoods who were surveyed have lost a close friend or family member to violence. Exposure to youth violence is a daily consideration for many young people in these communities. It is critical that we support youth violence prevention programs and invest in strategies to reduce and eliminate violence in young people's lives." — *Howard Pinderhughes*

Between the hours of 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. youth are more likely to become victims of crime and violence, and suffer unintentional injuries. Youth who participate in after-school programs, such as tutoring, mentoring, arts programs, organized sports, and job and vocational training, have been shown to have more positive peer relations, better grades and higher self-esteem. — *Choices for Youth*

"Increasing police presence in schools is not the answer to reducing youth violence. Reducing youth violence requires broad community involvement and an emphasis on conflict resolution." — *Jason Hodge*, Oakland School Board President

"I don't know how many studies we are going to have to read before we realize that if we don't neglect our kids after school we are going to be much further ahead." — *Senator Don Perata*





## CENTRAL VALLEY — JANUARY 31, 2002

The Central Valley forum brought more people than either the San Diego or Bay Area events.

Over 225 attendees from throughout the Central Valley met in Fresno to address violence against youth. The highlight of the conference for both the media and attendees was a survey of Central Valley youth conducted by youth. The survey, sponsored by Choices for Youth, was carried out by a select group of youth surveyors

who handled every step of the process with assistance from Maternal, Child, Adolescent Health. Their hard work paid off. The survey of 455 Central Valley youth received attention from the major Central Valley news outlets—NBC, ABC, CBS, Fox, and *The Fresno Bee*—as well as the interest of the forum attendees.

### The youth survey key findings were:

- 35% reported they can get a gun;
- 43% see 1–3 acts of violence a week at school;
- 42% reported they would be very likely to participate in a school dance or concert after school;
- 60% personally know someone who was a victim of violence; and
- 62% of youth believe that bullying is a natural part of youth culture and they don't do anything when they see it happen.



*In a single year in California,  
nearly 6,000 youth are  
hospitalized in connection  
with some form of violence.*

*Local teens and law  
enforcement got together to try  
to change these statistics.*

Central Valley's local leaders showed their strong support for violence prevention by participating

fully in the conference. In addition to speaking at the forum and participating in the press conference, Supervisor Juan Arambula, Captain Marty West, and Chief Larry Price participated in the working group sessions to examine the principles of effective violence prevention programs, and to develop policy recommendations.

Central Valley working groups

were assisted by the expertise of Sid Gardner, Center for Collaboration for Children, Nancy Lyons, Little Hoover Commission, and David Steinhart, Commonweal, The Juvenile Justice Program.

Wrapping up the day, as in the two previous forums, Central Valley participants shared their recommendations with the following local and state leaders: Sarah Reyes, California State Assembly; Nancy Matson, Crime and Violence Prevention Center, Attorney General's Office; Juan Arambula, Fresno County Board of Supervisors, and Larry Price, Fresno County Probation Department.

### The policy recommendations included:

- Allow time for school counselors to focus on mental health as well as academics;
- Offer incentives and better training for mental health workers;
- Provide more mental health services in the schools;
- Continue and expand Healthy Start programs; and
- Offer sustainable funding.

## FORUM UNITES CENTRAL VALLEY POLICYMAKERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT, EDUCATORS AND YOUTH TO PREVENT YOUTH VIOLENCE - LOCAL YOUTH SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS.

"Educators, lawmakers, and more than 100 teenagers gathered in downtown Fresno for a Youth Violence Prevention Forum. And it was the adults who were doing the listening. Local high school students surveyed nearly 500 young people, ages 12–17, and 36% of boys and girls aged 12–13 said they had access to guns."

— NBC KSEE 24 News at 6 PM

"62% said they believe bullying is a natural part of youth culture and that they don't do anything about it when they see it happen."

— Elizabeth Camarena, a student at Fresno City College

"We now have the voices of youth, and it's important to listen to their message. We need to listen to the youth and to hear their concerns for safety. Locally, this survey is the first of its kind. It gives something to work with in deciding how best to use our resources and what we need to address this problem."

— Supervisor Juan Arambula, Fresno County

"Teen participants at the forum believe one way to curb incidence of youth violence is to provide after-school programs like job training opportunities or dances to keep them busy." — FOX 10 O'clock News Hour

"I go to an after-school program everyday, just to have something to do. The place keeps people out of trouble. So you come here and stay out of trouble."

— Joseph Trujillo, 17-year-old

"Violence prevention programs are a good investment because they work. Youth who participate in after-school programs, such as tutoring, mentoring, arts programs, organized sports, and job and vocational training have been shown to have more positive peer relations, better grades and higher self-esteem."

— Larry Price, Fresno County Chief Probation Officer

"Students say it's essential for everyone to get involved to prevent violence and improve their communities." — NBC KSEE24 Sunrise

"Violence is out there. I mean, if you see it out there, then don't act like it's not your problem, because it is. People need to get involved. There needs to be more done about it—more to get kids off the streets, more after-school programs, and just a lot more involvement." — Phillip Marks, 15-year-old

"What I'm asking for is to have at least something here for the kids to come to and rely on afterwards when they're out of school. Because most of these kids are influenced into it because all they see is the fun of it—they don't see the bad side of it." — Mor Her on CBS News 47 at Five



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